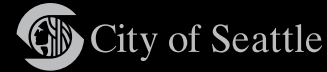
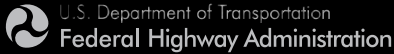


# The Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project

12.04



## Is the Viaduct an Essential Transportation Corridor?

Over 100,000 vehicles travel on the viaduct each day. Some have asked why the viaduct's capacity has to be replaced, suggesting that the viaduct could be removed and improvements to I-5, improvements to city streets north and south of downtown, significant increases in transit, and other projects could keep traffic moving. The project studied whether a no replacement concept would be feasible and found that it would result in severe congestion that would adversely affect downtown, surrounding neighborhoods and I-5. It is essential to maintain the viaduct's capacity not only to accommodate current traffic volumes, but to accommodate future growth in the region.

### For More Information:

#### Visit the Web site at:

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/  
projects/viaduct](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct)

#### Call the hotline:

206-269-4421

#### Send an e-mail to:

[viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov)

#### Send a letter to:

Alaskan Way Viaduct and  
Seawall Replacement Project  
c/o Washington State  
Department of Transportation  
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424  
Seattle, WA 98104

### What was included in the study?

The no replacement strategy evaluated in this study was:

- A four-lane surface street on Alaskan Way
- A single lane in each direction connecting surface Alaskan Way to the Battery Street Tunnel, with other lanes connecting to Elliott and Western Avenues
- Reasonable and achievable transit and transportation improvements to provide better access into and out of downtown with emphasis on prioritizing movement of transit and freight, people and goods.
- Potential management and operational changes to I-5 to improve its ability to carry through trips.

### What are the study's findings?

- The viaduct is an essential transportation corridor. It provides

access to downtown and, along with I-5, is the primary corridor for trips through downtown.

- Even with the most optimistic assumptions about increasing transit, transportation management strategies, improvements to the downtown street system, and shifting traffic to other routes, the four-lane surface option would result in gridlock on I-5, and congestion for most of the day and into the evening on downtown streets and Alaskan Way.
- Four-lane and six-lane surface replacement concepts do not create a livable and pedestrian-friendly waterfront. Even though the viaduct is removed, Alaskan Way will become the busiest street downtown, carrying more traffic than Mercer Street.
- Coupled with the analysis in the Draft EIS, this is further evidence that the six-lane surface option is not feasible.

## What are the traffic impacts of not replacing the viaduct?

Severe. Not replacing the viaduct will cause severe congestion for most of the day and into the evening.

- Traffic on surface Alaskan Way would quadruple along the central waterfront; 35,000 to 56,000 vehicles per day would drive on the four lanes of Alaskan Way compared to about 10,000 today.
- Downtown street traffic would increase 30 to 50 percent, with the greatest increase in Pioneer Square and the waterfront. Congestion would increase, lasting most of the day and into the evening.
- I-5 does not have capacity for trips from the viaduct corridor. I-5 is already congested through much of the day, into the evening, and will become even more so as the region continues to grow. The needed improvements to add capacity to I-5 will cost billions of dollars.
- Neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections will be severely degraded. Neighborhoods west of I-5 (i.e. Ballard, Queen Anne, Magnolia, and West Seattle) will be less accessible and face longer commute times.

## Can more transit replace the viaduct?

No. Even after the most aggressive strategies to increase transit ridership and prioritize transit access, the remaining trips will exceed the capacity of Alaskan Way, downtown

streets, and I-5. This study looked at ways to maximize mobility for people by accommodating as much travel as possible on transit. Measures to prioritize transit moving to and through downtown streets by breaking through congestion points with transit lanes and priority systems were studied. Even with light rail and increased use of transit, growth in population, employment, and commercial activities will still result in increased traffic. The region faces the challenge that maximizing the use of transit is just one of many necessary steps to keep pace with regional growth.

In addition, removal of the viaduct could have detrimental impacts to efforts to provide efficient transit service that gives people an option other than being stuck in traffic. Without the viaduct, traffic diverting to downtown streets would increase congestion, making it difficult to dedicate and reliably operate the lanes we need to keep transit service moving smoothly.

## Can improvements to the downtown street network replace the viaduct?

No. Even after maximizing the efficiency of the existing downtown street network, there is not enough capacity for trips if the viaduct is not replaced. A full range of improvements were considered, including improving connections within the street grid,

addressing existing bottlenecks, adding access ramps from the Spokane Street Viaduct, and giving transit priority. In fact, the benefits of these improvements could be negated by the impacts of closing the viaduct. The region will need to improve the downtown street network, expand and improve transit services, and implement effective travel demand measures simply to address existing problems and keep pace with growth.

## Can I-5 replace the viaduct?

No. Today, I-5 is at capacity much of the day. Even with improvements costing billions of dollars, I-5 cannot handle both the projected regional growth and trips from the viaduct. Every reasonable and achievable improvement to I-5 was considered, including elimination of weaving issues, reconfiguring exit ramps to downtown, and improving access to and management of the express lanes.

## Were freight priority measures considered?

Yes. There are few opportunities to give freight priority through downtown without the Alaskan Way Viaduct corridor due to the limited number of alternate routes. Other routes are either poorly suited for heavy truck traffic (downtown streets) or do not have available capacity (I-5).

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